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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KINSHASA 001050

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SUBJECT: UN SPECIAL ENVOY FOR THE GREAT LAKES OBASANJO
BRIEFS KINSHASA-BASED AMBASSADORS

REF: A) KINSHASA 1015 B) KINSHASA 1004

Classified By: Ambassador William Garvelink for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

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¶1. (C) Summary: UN Great Lakes Envoy Olusegun Obasanjo briefed Kinshasa-based diplomats November 15 on his meetings with Angolan President dos Santos and with senior DRC officials, including President Kabila. Dos Santos told Obasanjo that there were no Angolan troops in the DRC, except for a few advisors in the West, and that Angolan forces would only intervene in an extreme situation -- monumental loss of life or threat to the DRC's territorial integrity. Kabila gave Obasanjo his full support and unhesitatingly agreed that Obasanjo should meet rebel leader Nkunda, which Obasanjo subsequently did on November 16 (ref A). Obasanjo said it would be important to identify some "low-hanging fruits" to ensure that the process gains momentum. Acting DAS Karl Wycoff suggested that dealing with the FDLR was a low-hanging fruit. EU Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Roeland Van de Geer stressed the importance of a coordinated U.S.-EU approach. In a private meeting later, Van de Geer told us that he was "very disappointed" with French attempts to get the Angolans to intervene bilaterally in North Kivu, but the Angolans, to their credit, had stood fast. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) On November 15, newly-named UN Special Envoy for the Great Lakes, former Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo, briefed Kinshasa's diplomatic corps on his recent meetings with Angolan President Eduardo dos Santos and DRC President Joseph Kabila. Ambassador, Acting AF DAS Wycoff, and PolCouns attended for the USG.

Angola: intervene only in extraordinary circumstances

¶3. (SBU) According to Obasanjo, dos Santos clearly identified issues of concern for Luanda in the Eastern DRC: mining to finance armed groups; small arms trafficking; instability from the multitude of rebel groups in the region; and the FARDC's glaring weakness. Dos Santos categorically denied that any Angolan troops were fighting in North Kivu. He added that significant numbers of Angolan forces would only enter the DRC "in very special circumstances;" including monumental loss of life or an imminent threat to the DRC's territorial integrity. Obasanjo encouraged dos Santos to take a more active role in facilitating better relations between Kabila and Rwandan President Paul Kagame. After some initial hesitation, dos Santos agreed to be helpful, but only "at the right time."

Obasanjo's Observations

¶ 14. (SBU) Obasanjo said his meetings with DRC officials -- Kabila, Senate President Kengo wa Dondo, and National Assembly President Vital Kamerhe -- had been positive. Kabila had unhesitatingly okayed direct Obasanjo-Nkunda contacts. Obasanjo confirmed he had already been in telephonic contact with Nkunda, urging him to return to a political dialogue and not to interfere with humanitarian assistance operations.

¶ 15. (SBU) Preliminary discussions, according to Obasanjo, indicate that the level of bitterness between the government and CNDP is not nearly at the same level that was present in recent West African conflicts. There was an element of "tolerance and accommodation" on both sides. All of this bodes well for progress.

¶ 16. (SBU) It was vital, in Obasanjo's view, that MONUC did not develop a weak image. It needed to be able to serve effectively as the ultimate guarantor of a durable cease-fire. Obasanjo stressed that the successful implementation of any political settlement would require additional financial support from the international community. Previous agreements had foundered because of lack of adequate financing. Obasanjo said that it would be important to identify several "low-hanging fruits" to give the political process momentum.

UK Ambassador's Views

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¶ 17. (SBU) UK Ambassador Nick Kay underscored HMG's support for Obasanjo's efforts. Whether Rwanda and the DRC are truly committed to peace is key, but Kay said the British Government believes both sides wanted peace in the Kivus. The international community needed to tell Nkunda clearly what was politically acceptable to the GDRC, its neighbors, the region, and the broader international community. Kay stressed that dealing with the FDLR and the DDRRR process should also be part of Obasanjo's focus.

USG Comments

¶ 18. (SBU) Acting AF DAS Wycoff pointed to Operation Kimia -- the fight against the FDLR -- as "low-hanging fruit." Obasanjo replied that many, including Rwandan CHOD James Kabarebe, had advised him that anti-FDLR efforts should focus on the group's senior leadership. MONUC Force Commander General Gaye agreed, but cautioned that MONUC's current mandate only allowed its forces to engage the FDLR in joint operations with the FARDC.

¶ 19. (SBU) Wycoff said that all mutual provocations should stop to allow a cease-fire to take hold firmly. Re-invigorating the political process was important, but Wycoff noted, we also should continue with issues in the military sphere, such as ultimately integrating the CNDP forces into the FARDC. Wycoff pointed to USG efforts to reduce regional tensions, including strengthening the Joint Verification Mechanism and supporting the Tripartite Plus format, which could expand its efforts to include regional economic integration and fighting the illegal mining and export of minerals. General Gaye noted that MONUC has a multiplier effect, but he repeated his line (ref B) that "zero times anything still equals zero."

European Union Views

¶ 10. (SBU) EU Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Roeland Van de Geer reiterated EU support for on-going programs operating

on the ground, including the Joint Monitoring Group and the Tripartite Plus. He noted that the challenge would be to ensure that these processes "feed up" into Obasanjo's mediation.

¶11. (SBU) In a follow-up meeting with the Ambassador and Acting AF DAS Wycoff, Van de Geer stressed that Obasanjo was in a "honeymoon period" now, so we needed to build on that momentum. The U.S. and EU should also carefully coordinate regarding Obasanjo's call for additional financing.

¶12. (C) Van de Geer volunteered that he was "very disappointed" with the position of France within the EU on facilitation efforts, especially given France's current role as EU President. Paris, according to Van de Geer, had been encouraging Angola to intervene bilaterally in the Kivus. Angola, to its credit, had resisted the GOF's entreaties. France also believed the EU "was giving too much weight to Nkunda.

¶13. (C) Van de Geer said that he would brief senior-level representatives of the 27 Members States on November 17. He said he would make the case that additional EU troops on the ground would help the EU's diplomacy. Van de Geer said that, only France and the UK have the logistical capabilities to contribute significantly to any EU force. The UK, according to Van de Geer, can justifiably argue that it is already overstretched globally, while France carries regional baggage. Van de Geer opined that, perhaps, the best solution would be a group of small, but engaged Member States could provide the bulk of the troops with the UK, France, and Germany providing logistical support.

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